

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Kazo Tanima, 87, coffee farmer

"When the [coffee] price was good, and when it was bad, it was a Kona where both the stores and the growers [and others] made their living from kopi. When you say Kona--that's coffee. When you say coffee--that's Kona."

Kazo Tanima, one of four children, was born on November 13, 1893, in Yamaguchi-ken, Japan. He was summoned to Hawaii in 1912 by his father, Tomakichi, a plantation laborer in Lahaina. After engaging in contract sugarcane cultivation on Maui for three years, Kazo and his father came to Kona.

Shortly after their arrival, Kazo began farming coffee on 5-1/2 acres of leased land in Keauhou. A lifetime coffee farmer, he experienced the ups and downs of the coffee market, participated in the debt adjustment movement of the 1930s, and benefited from the post-World War II technological developments in farming.

Although coffee farming has been the mainstay of his life, Kazo was once involved in commercial coffee roasting, coffee trading, vegetable farming, trucking, and poi-making.

An active community member, Kazo continues to participate in the activities of the neighborhood kumi and the Daifukuji Soto Mission. Today, he and his wife, Fujie, reside in Kahaluu where they still work 2-1/2 acres of land.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Kazo Tanimi (KT)

November 10, 1980

Kahaluu Mauka, Kona, Hawaii

BY: Michiko Kodama (MK)

[NOTE: Interview conducted in Japanese. Translation done by Paul Scott Lehman.]

MK: When were you born, Mr. Tanimi?

KT: I was born on November 15th in 1893.

MK: And what was the name of the place where you were born?

KT: Uh--1222 Aza-Hashiyajima, Iwakuni City, Yamaguchi Prefecture.

MK: How many were there in your family when you were a child?

KT: Uh, well---Anyway, when I was about six there were four kids, but two died about three years later. . . .but then two more were born after that, so there were actually four kids all along.

MK: What sort of work did your parents do at that time?

KT: Oh, it was agriculture--they were farmers. It was a time when I would go and help when I got home from school.

MK: What sort of agriculture was your family involved in?

KT: Oh, rice, wheat, potatoes--the kinds of things farmers grow--that was what we ate. It was our lifeline. (Chuckles)

MK: About how many tsubo [35.58 square feet] of land did [your family] own?

KT: The land? Well, back then we had about eight tan [tan = .245 acre], so--it was eight Japanese tan, so that would be two acres as we measure it in Hawaii. Because four Japanese tan are equal to one acre here.

MK: How was the land that your family owned, compared with the land owned by other people in the neighborhood?

KT: Oh, well--the quality of the soil wasn't too bad. It was well established. And the place where we grew the rice and the wheat was furthest to the south and got very good sunlight. It was a place where the crop was especially good.

MK: What sort of life did the people in the neighborhood lead?

KT: Eh? Oh, we were all the same, farmers. It was the same all over.

MK: Can you remember the old village and explain a little bit to me about what kind of village it was?

KT: The place where we were was called Terada-mura. Actually, where we were it was divided into Machi-mura and Hon-mura--with the mountain up behind the estate as one of the boundaries. Hon-mura was on the east and south; and Machi-mura was on the west. And then within Hon-mura, the southernmost village was Kurumijo, next was Hikijo, and then Terada-mura, the village that I was born in. So it was divided up in three parts.

MK: About how many houses were there in the village?

KT: Let me see. . . .if you put all three [villages] together there were probably only about 60 or so. Together with Machi-mura it was a place of about 110 homes. A cousin was saying that there are about 150 [homes] there now, but when I was little there were only 100--or at the most 110--houses, I think. And now, the young people are all attracted to the city, so there aren't many in the country. When they get a proper job and can make money, they all go out on their own and live overseas. Eventually there gets to be nobody but old folks left in the country.

MK: When you lived in the village, what was the house you lived in like?

KT: Oh, well--it was a farmhouse. There weren't any samurai or shizoku where we were. (Chuckles) It was all farms and farmers.

MK: What were the houses that the farmers lived in like?

KT: [KT mishears or misunderstands question.] Oh, where we lived, things grew very well. In our vicinity there were islands that were part of Hiroshima Prefecture, and Ehime Prefecture. Of course, Ehime's in Shikoku, but there were islands that belonged to it there too. So together with Yamaguchi Prefecture there were islands belonging to three prefectures there. They had boundaries over the water. That from such and such a place to such and such a place was Hiroshima's territory, and from such and such to such and such was Ehime Prefecture's, and from such and such to such and such was inside Yamaguchi Prefecture's territory--like that. So there were boundaries even over the water. So it was like that.

There were a lot of rocks on the islands that belonged to Hiroshima. And Ehime Prefecture--well, it had islands too, and there weren't as many rocks as on the Hiroshima side, but the islands were kind of small. So as far as living was concerned, our island got the reputation of being the best place to live.

MK: What sort of food was there on the island?

KT: Food? Well, like I said before--rice, wheat, potatoes. And vegetables. We grew all kinds of vegetables, because that was the island's means of survival--our lifeline.

MK: How did the house you lived in, the food you ate, and the work your family did compare with that of other people in the neighborhood?

KT: Well, it was the same for any farmer. There really wasn't much difference.

MK: You said that when you were little you went to school, right? Which school did you go to?

KT: The elementary school on Hashiya Island went up as far as the sixth year. After that you either went to night school, or you could specially go and ask the teacher [to tutor you]. If there was some place like a supplementary school [private tutor] set up you could go there. It was like that.

MK: When you were going to the elementary school, how were the teachers?

KT: Well, let's see--the teacher was a very fine gentleman, but Master Akutagawa, the principal, (chuckles) had such an ugly face that I got a fellow named Saburo Shimabe to draw it up on the bulletin board. I was scolded for that. He [Master Akutagawa] held my head down with two fingers, like this and said, "Because you wrote bad things about me, you must quit this school as of today," and he refused [to teach] me.

Looking back on it now, I think I came up with a pretty smart answer for being so little. "That's all right, Master," I said. "I'll just watch and learn." That's what I said in reply. So then he let go of my head that he was holding with his fingers and didn't say anything back to me. So, well, it was like that. And because I went to Master Tokiwamaru Kuwabara's night school at night, when I went to school during the day even for dictation the teacher wouldn't give me any book. I would do it without the book. When we would do dictation, there were 16 students in my class--but out of that it was only me who wouldn't be shown the book.

One time it happened when we were doing dictation that I just couldn't visualize the characters for "The monkey is cunning." You know how they say--meaning that they are smart in an evil way. It was when I was in the fourth grade, but we were sitting at desks like this (gestures) with--one, two, three, four--four kids in a row, and a drawer here. (Gestures) At that time in Japan, when you went to the toilet you raised your hand and said, "Master, I am

going to urinate," or "I am going to defecate." You said what you meant--raised your hand and said what you meant, and when you were told, "Very well", then you went to the toilet. So I, at the time quietly slipped a book in my pocket. I remembered which page the work "cunning" was on, so I went to the toilet and stood there and looked it up. (Chuckles) Then I went back and wound up getting an "A". So I think that I was quite cunning from the time I was little. (Chuckles)

MK: But you went to school for six years and night school, too?

KT: Yes, I did. And then when I went to night school--before in Japan, the books by Mencius and Confucius and other old scholars were all in Chinese characters, so that a line like, "Shikari shikōshite iwaku . . ." would have numbers like one, two, and three written by it--and for reading up and down there was the kana for "re" which meant you read the bottom one first and the top one after. And I went and studies those books written all in Chinese characters. It was like that; I had 28 cousins in all, but at that time--I was only seven or eight or so--I was said to be the best educated of my relatives.

MK: You said something yesterday about how the school principal visited your mother once and said something to her . . .

KT: Yes. He came with Kumajiro Okazaki, who was the mayor's assistant--he helped out at the town office. The two of them came and said, "Since this boy is smart, won't you please send him to middle school?"

But my mother said, "Since this boy's father is so poor that he has had to go to Hawaii to earn a living, it would be indefensible of me to send this boy from a branch family to middle school, when none of the sons from the main family [ancestral home] are even going. Therefore I must refuse", and she turned them down.

MK: And how did you feel [about that]?

KT: At the time, I was disappointed. But I had been born poor, and there was nothing I could do about that. I thought it was probably god's discipline, so I gave up. So then I farmed--as I farmed, my stomach began giving trouble, but there was a good doctor in a place called Wada in the Oshima Islands. So I would hire a boat and go to see the doctor in Wada, but he couldn't find the cause.

Sometimes my mother would get mad. "The doctor says you don't have to come anymore, but you're still not right. Are you sure you're not making it up?" she would say to scold me. Well, that made me mad. Even though I was only 16, I was good at carrying things on my back. I was strong even though I was skinny. So I took some wheat--eight big bundles like this--and put it on what we called an oiko--which was a thing like this [wooden pack frame] and strapped it on and headed back. When I got about oh, 500 feet or so from the house, I thought it was a bit much, so I stopped and put it

down to rest. But then when I strapped it back on I couldn't stand up again. So I left it there and went home. My mother went out the morning of the next day to pick it up and figured that I really must not have been well, after all. So this time I went to Kaigoshi--a place called Kaigoshi in Hiroshima Prefecture--it was on Nomi Island--where there was said to be a good doctor. I stayed there about--until I was cured. This time I had [medical] insurance and I stayed until the doctor said that I was all right and that the problem wouldn't flare up again. It was about two months. Everything went just fine after that, and I was well again.

Up until then it had been like that and it had been okay, but after that I became very healthy. Even after I came to Hawaii there was only one time when I got a little--uh, how should I say it--my anus became inflamed and I had to go to the doctor. That doctor was--I've forgotten his name right now, but I went to him and he burned it [treated me] with silver nitrate, I think it was, and I developed a very high fever. Oh, the doctor was very worried and my parents were worried.

After I had recovered--after it was over with he said, "There would have been no excuse if I had killed your precious son." Ever since then though--ever since I got better, I've been very healthy.

MK: And you're still healthy now at age 87, right?

KT: Yep. Healthy and doing fine.

MK: When you were young, uh--because you were healthy did you kōkua for your father and mother?

KT: Yes, I did.

MK: In what ways would you kōkua for them on an average day?

KT: First of all, after I got out of school--at our place we would go to work at about 8 o'clock in the morning, and when pau hana finally came, well, we wouldn't get back until the sun had gone behind the mountain. Yes, it was a place where we did that much work. We would get back when it was dark. I had worked like that over there, so the work I did here [Hawaii] didn't bother me a bit.

When I went back [to Japan] 33 or 34 years ago my sister said to me, "Do you remember when we carried the fertilizer?" My sister was 15, I was 12, and after father had gone to Hawaii our mother got what was called "chronic fits," where your chest was just packed up with a cough all the time and you got so you couldn't breathe. There was a disease like that. So that was when the two of us had carried the fertilizer and spread it on the wheat and such.

There was a time like that in Japan. And for a child of about 12--just think of it in terms of kids around here now! Carrying things like that, and going and spreading it. I tell you, we had a rough time.

And then harvest time would come, right? At times like that we would carry back--because some parents made small oiko for their children when they were about 12. We would put them on--when we got home from school we would put them on and head up the mountain. And then in the evening when it was time to go home, we would put them on and go back. That was our usual practice.

Then when you could handle that, there was what was called tawara --there's the grass [straw] that's left after you harvest the rice, right? Well, we would weave it into things [bags] to put the rice and wheat in. Then we would take rope and tie them in three places. You had to kick them [as you did it], but if you didn't kick and pull with your hands at just the right time, it [the bag] wouldn't close up right. Because I was doing things like that from the time I was little--around 12 or 13--they [the bags] wouldn't come out even on both sides, but would be fat on one side and skinny on the other. (Laughs) I turned out pretty unsightly ones, but even so, I'd make do somehow.

The first thing you can say about my childhood is that I had that kind of a hard time. Then when I was 15--in Japan we had what was called a four to measure. The kerosene cans they use here [in Hawaii] hold about one to. And one that holds four to is a four-to one. I would even carry that when I was 15. The children nowadays--in pound weight that's 125 pounds. That's what I would carry.

So because I was made to handle heavy things from the time I was little like that, I became strong. And because I overworked like that from the time I was little, I now have pains in my back and my shoulders.

MK: You certainly did work a lot.

KT: Yes, I sure did work. So now even at the age of 87. . . . The year I'll be 87--counting only full years I'm 86, but on the 15th of this November I'll be a full 87. Even now, I bag cherry coffee, load it into the jeep, go out and come back. There sure isn't anyone else in his 80's who is going to carry something like that. That's why everyone says, "Oh you're so healthy, so healthy."

Whenever Reverend [Shugen] Komagata sees me we always shake hands, and he'll grip my hand with all his might and I'll grip right back. (Laughs) So then sometimes the reverend will pull like this, but I've still got enough strength so that when I pull, the reverend almost staggers. (Laughs) At his initiation ceremony at the beginning of October--or was it September--you could look in the book and find out, I think. But at that time we shook hands and he pulled, so I pulled back real hard. He was astounded! "Mr. Tanima is very strong!" he was saying. (Laughs)

MK: When you were little and worked, was there anything you did to play when you weren't working?

KT: Oh, no. Time for playing--only when we were going to school. At the athletic meets--I was a bad little rascal then--I was always playing war. I would scrape and peel the bark off of a branch from a cherry tree and make a sword. I was the leader of the gang and would command them and we would always play war. (Laughs)

MK: So that's how you played . . .

KT: Yes, well--mostly things like that. My mother would get mad--because sometimes kids would stub their toe or something and their parents would come and complain. So one time my mother got mad and tied my hands with a hand towel (laughs), and then took a coal--a burning coal and put it there. At that time it burned all brown and yellow. So I was scolded like that--I was really a rascal then.

MK: That was when you were a bad boy, right?

KT: Yep, a very bad boy.

MK: Did relatives other than your father and mother and brothers and sisters--like did your aunts and uncles--ever come over and get together with each other and do something?

KT: Oh well, they would only come over when there was a memorial service--if it was the anniversary of my grandfather's, or my father's brother's or sister's death, or something like that. Just about everybody was a farmer--trying their damndest to grow food, eat and stay alive. That's all they all could think about.

MK: So you didn't do anything with the people in the neighborhood or with your friends?

KT: No, no. Just when there was a festival, or during Bon, times like that--or at the New Year's banquet during New Year's. They could only come at a time like that, because otherwise it was all just farming, day in and day out. It's understandable that people don't want to farm nowadays. (Laughs) In the old days there wasn't really any place you could go to make money. You just worked and grew your own food and ate it--there wasn't any other way. It was pretty miserable for people born in the old days.

MK: You were in Japan until the time you were 19, is that right?

KT: Yes.

MK: Did you stay with your family and help them until you were 19?

KT: Yes. Up until it came time to go to Hawaii.

MK: Were you receiving any money because you were working with the family?

KT: Well, our father was sending an allowance. My mother--because I was young and would say something to her--whenever I said that something had come up, she would give me money.

"How much do you need?" she'd say. And I'd tell her such and such and get it from my mother.

MK: What kinds of things would you do with the allowance?

KT: Well, the allowance was for, uh--a drink in the evening if someone came over. (Chuckles) Or sometimes we would get together and say, "How about having a big feast tonight?" or something like that. Because out in the country, eating and drinking are two of the pleasures of life. That's about it, really. There weren't any drinking places, (laughs) and certainly no red-light district. That was about it.

MK: So when you were a young man--when you were 19, what sort of person did you want to become?

KT: No, back around then I had written that I was coming to Hawaii, but my father said that Hawaii wasn't a place for a young person to come. But when I wrote and said that if it was like that then I would go to Korea or Taiwan to work. He replied that in that case, he would go through with the formalities and bring me over [to Hawaii]. So that was the reason that I came over here.

Before that, when I had turned 18 I told my mother that if I couldn't go to school I was going to go enlist in the navy. The reason I said that was because there was a Naval Academy on Eta Island in Hiroshima.

My uncle, a man called Asanosuke Matsubayashi would go here and there by boat, buying goods and such--he just had a small business buying [and selling] different things. Where we lived back then, they would weave what were called toma to use on the boat when it would rain. So he would take those to the big trawlers like they have now that would go across to Korea to catch sardines. That was his, Asanosuke Matsubayashi's specialty--to deliver the toma in bags to the boats.

When I was 16 I had gone with him there to help and had seen the young students who had graduated, looking sharp as they grandly walked about the town with their [Charlie] Chaplin-style moustaches and their little swords slung here like this (gestures to indicate swords on hips). After I had seen that I thought, "To be a real man, you really have to become a soldier," and that was my motive for wanting to enlist in the navy.

But then--in front of Iwakuni there's a small island called Kabuto Island. And then, in Kure, there were warships at Kure Naval Base. In Japan, there were naval bases in Yokosuka, Kure, and Maejiro--these three places. And then Sasebo--there were four places, but

the fleet in Kure used Kabuto Island as a target during its naval maneuvers. There was a warship--I think it was the Iwate.

At a place high up above the beach near where we lived there was a huge pine tree--oh, at least 17 or 18 feet around. The first branch pointed east, the second branch pointed west, the third branch pointed south and the fourth branch pointed north. There was a tree like that. So anyway, a commissioned officer in the navy--I guess he was probably only a first or second lieutenant--came to see it.

Afterwards, he came by our place like this, and since my mother was a woman who loved to talk, she told him that I was going to enlist as a volunteer and asked him what the navy was like.

But he said, "No. Don't let him enlist as a volunteer. I was a volunteer, too, and I really suffered." So my mother explained to my why I shouldn't go in the navy and that's how the issue of coming to Hawaii was settled and we went through the formalities, and I came to Hawaii.

MK: But your father had said that Hawaii was no good for a young man, right? Why was that?

KT: Yes. Well, (chuckles) it's the same for any young person, but relations between men and women--although it may seem like an improper subject--were a factor. As parents--because they thought there wouldn't be anything like that in Hawaii--I think they felt sorry for me because of that and told me not to come. As parents they worried that there wouldn't be any pleasures like that over here.

MK: You said something about wanting to go to Taiwan . . .

KT: Yes. I thought I would go over there if my father didn't call me to Hawaii.

MK: But why did you want to go to Taiwan?

KT: It was a Japanese possession at the time, and if I couldn't come to Hawaii. . . .and if I went there they had sugar plantations and there was lots of work, I figured. Basically, I thought I would go so that I could (chuckles) make some money.

MK: You've been mentioning your father, but your father went to Lahaina in about 1905, didn't he?

KT: Yes.

MK: What kind of work did he do in Lahaina?

KT: Plantation work--so it was kachi kane--harvesting cane. Then he did what was called kibikuwa, where you would make the line [row] that the cane was planted in. And then since Lahaina was a place

of so little rain, you had to irrigate or you couldn't grow cane. So kibikuwa was where you made the lines so that the water would flow through the right places. Mostly it was all work like that.

MK: And since your father was living in Lahaina from 1905, when he wrote letters and such, what sort of things would he write?

KT: The ones he sent to us. . . .Oh, well, he would ask how people were doing at the time, if they were healthy--or that he was healthy and working every day. The contents were mostly like that.

MK: Did your father also send money and such?

KT: Yes, he was.

MK: Was it enough for both you and your mother?

KT: Oh yeah, mostly we grew all the things we ate, so there wasn't much we had to buy. Wheat, rice, and we grew sweet potatoes, we grew timber. And flour and such--we would grind up in a stone mortar to make dumplings and the like. In the old days we would grind it by hand--not with machines like nowadays. (Chuckles) We would make it and eat it like that. Of course, we grew vegetables, and even Irish potatoes, and corn. Just like when you write the characters hyaku [a hundred] and sei [to grow] to mean farming, our work (chuckles) was to grow and eat everything.

MK: Would you have been able to get along even if your father had not been sending any money?

KT: Yes, because we had enough land and such to get along, we didn't have to worry at all. It was just that spending money---Because we were farmers, if we didn't sell our rice or wheat we wouldn't have any spending money. So my father would think of us and send us some. Because he had been a farmer, too, he knew what our home life was like already. So he would anticipate our needs and send us something.

END SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: When you grew rice and wheat in Japan, would it take a year before you could sell it? Or did you have something to sell every six months or so and get money that way?

KT: Yes, well, uh--in Japan out in the country, somebody would come to buy sweet potatoes or something like that, or we would just barter. Sometimes a fisherman would come (chuckles) asking to trade fish for potatoes. Bartering with people like that. "Will you trade for some wheat?" or "Will you trade for some rice?" In the country in Japan there's lots of bartering like that.

MK: So in Japan it was different from like in Kona, and you didn't have to wait a year before the money was paid?

KT: Eh? What's that? You mean the money and whatnot that we were contracted for? Oh, that was once a year. Everybody made it a point to pay by the 31st of December, which is set and when they were mentally ready for it, too. The 31st of December was the cutoff date for payment and also served as a reference point for all lending and borrowing.

MK: To go back to old times again--from what your father had said, what did you think you would encounter in Hawaii?

KT: Oh, you mean generally, my work?

MK: Work and other things. What kind of things did you think there would be?

KT: Oh, nothing in particular--being in Japan you didn't know, really. I knew that if I went to Hawaii I could make money because older guys from around where we lived had gone over and come back. And I knew that they had said that it was mostly work for sugar growers, so I thought it would be cane farming. When I got over here--well, when we came there weren't many merchants yet--sugar growers were the main thing.

Then later, in Honolulu, capitalists came in from America doing this and that, and there got to be more work--gradually there came to be all kinds of jobs.

In the old days there were a lot of guys who just drifted into some kanaka's place and ate his poi and hung around. Or they gambled. I didn't even like to see gambling and the like.

My father and I would go out together and kachi kane 30 days out of 30. During one month in 1916 my father and I did hāpai kō--we loaded cane-- for 30 days out of 30. And when we did it, it even appeared in the newspaper--in the Maui newspaper--that we had made so much money.

At that time, Lahaina is a very hot place. It was near town if you were working on the plain it was so hot you would drink water and the sweat would just come pouring out of you. Loading cane in a place like that.

For one ton back then we got thirty-eight--no, maybe forty-eight cents. And we used to haul and load when it [the pay] was so cheap. One car loaded--loaded normally--would be a full ton.

MK: That was between 1912 and 1916, wasn't it?

KT: Yes. Uh, well--around then I was doing that kind of hāpai kō. And back then we had crews--the Tanima crew, and you would have your crew, and each one would have about 10, or at the most 12 or

13 people. We would cut and load it. Cut a line, [row] and then cut the cane and load it in the loading car. We would put a 2-by-12 [board] across to the car as a bridge and we would carry the cane up it to load the car.

MK: This was when you came to Hawaii on the S.S. Siberia [S.S. Persia] in 1912 and were growing sugarcane under contract together with your father?

KT: This was before that.

MK: Was it day work?

KT: No, it was so much per ton, forty-eight cents. And we loaded it. One ton--we would cut it, we would load, and then we would have the mules pull it out along a narrow side road to the main road. For that we got forty-eight cents a ton at that time. At that time the daily wage was ninety cents. Work one day and you got ninety cents. Ten hours for ninety cents. When I tell people about this now, the ones born in this time laugh.

At that time we would take the sugar cars--Matson Company's steamships would come from the Mainland to load the sugar, right? For working in the warehouse for ten hours to help get the ship loaded we would only get a dollar and a quarter [\$1.25]. Then there were the guys who did the work on the dock. They worked ten hours and got a dollar fifty [\$1.50]. It was like that. For the most part, sugar was done by using people like they were cats or dogs.

MK: So from 1914 to about 1916 you were growing sugar under contract?

KT: Yes. I started growing by contract because my father had been injured, and I didn't speak any kanaka. Back then the lunas were kanaka--this was back when most people spoke kanaka. The Portagees [Portuguese] were lunas, too. So since the lunas were kanakas or Portagees, if you didn't understand their language, you'd have difficulties even if you went to work. That's why I started growing by contract. I thought I could do much more work with my father that way. That was my motive for doing it.

MK: Could you explain a little about contract-growing? How did you do it?

KT: In doing ukekibi [independent cultivation of sugar by contract], you first cut a line like I just told you about. Then the womenfolk--they got about oh, seventy-five cents a day back then, I guess. They would take the cane tops, trim them to about 25 or 26 centimeters and plant them in the row. You got so you could tell how many each line [row] would need, and you would just trim them and throw them down in a row. Then afterwards, you would go back and put a little dirt on each one.

Then the ones who did what was called hanawai--the ones who would irrigate--would make a water course alongside each row so that the water would flow to each [plant] in turn.

So we would plant and then irrigate--Each section being divided up into about 24 lines, being about 14 or 15 feet wide, and having about 20 zig-zags across. We would plant the cane like that and then bring in the water like this (shows on paper)--here and here--so that it would flow in a zig-zag pattern. That's how we planted.

And then below that 20, the water would come pouring through the ditch and so we would dig another ditch to make it flow into the small, zig-zag water course by each line. And so we would plant like that in twenty lines because we had to irrigate. You couldn't just irrigate one whole acre from top to bottom at one time.

MK: How many months did you do ukekibi?

KT: Some were for fourteen months. Then there was a 12-month uke [contract] and a 16-month uke. What that means, is that--like I just said--we would cut the rows, the womenfolk would plant, and then after it was irrigated--16 or 18 months later--it would be ready to cut. So you had an uke of 16 months and would cultivate cane until then. There were ones like that. And on one for 14 months, if you let them sit for a while after you do kachi kane, then there are ones that have already sprouted. If you then just irrigate and grow them like that, then that's about a 14-month contract.

MK: And what kind of contract was the one you had?

KT: Fourteen months, yes. One or two months had passed since we cut the cane, so they already had sprouts about like this, right? (Gestures) For the most part, we would cut back the ones that had sprouted that much and let them grow out again. The reason we would do it that way was because when the sprouts are out early, then later on the cane flower will come out early, too--like it was ripe already. So because the flowers would come out early they would make us do what was called kachi baku [cutting back]. If there wasn't enough time then the plantation would do it without cutting it, but it would be 14 months or 12 months. It was divided up into three types like that [Twelve-, 14-, and 16-month types].

MK: When you were doing ukekibi, what were the hours like each day?

KT: The hours? Well, we had to irrigate every day or it [the cane] would be burned by the sun. It's very hot in Lahaina. We had to make a complete round [of the fields] at least every two days. It's very hot.

MK: So you would get up early in the morning and work until dusk?

KT: Yes, until--uh, well--until 4 [o'clock p.m.]. Because pau hana was at 4 [o'clock]. In the mornings we would start at 6 [o'clock].

MK: Since you had a contract, did you hire anyone?

KT: Yes, we did.

MK: About how many?

KT: Well, at first weeds grow up, right? So we would contract for thirty-five or forty cents a square--an acre. And we would have to pay that. Then when the cane gets big, the leaves fall off and make shade so the weeds don't grow. But up until then, you just have to hire people. You'd hire the women--20 or 30--and have them hō hana.

MK: Did you make any money on that contract?

KT: Yes, well--if it would rain for you later on--like when it was only about two months until your 14 months were up. If it rains then, then that's your profit. Because you don't have to irrigate yourself, you don't have to pay out that money. Things like that are what give you a break. It's to your advantage. It wasn't a really huge profit, but we made about \$3,000.

MK: Where were you living when you were doing ukekibi in Lahaina?

KT: At Pump Camp.

MK: What kind of camp was Pump Camp?

KT: Oh, well, it was just a long house the plantation had built, partitioned up into individual rooms that were provided to the workmen for free. They weren't very big rooms, though. (Chuckles) Just a place to sleep.

Back then--well, there were what were called the ōgokku, because some people did not do their own cooking, and the tegokku, which was for the married ones so you could cook it at your own place. We didn't cook, so we went to the ōgokku. The cook's fee for one month back then was seven dollars.

So with a wage of a dollar a day, if you worked 30 days and had \$30, minus seven dollars makes it \$23. Then to have your laundry done was two dollars a month. Anyway, out of about \$20 you would then buy cigarettes, or the ones who liked sake would buy sake. If you wanted to have a cup in the evening, you'd have a cup. You couldn't guzzle it. (Chuckles) So we'd have a drink like that.

Basically though, back then if you worked like a good man for a full year and had \$200 of pure profit, you were a very good person. And if you weren't a really good man, \$200 was very hard [to get].

MK: You said that when you were doing ukekibi you made three thousand dollars, is that right?

KT: Yes.

MK: Compared with \$200, \$3,000 is much different, isn't it?

KT: Yes, it's very different. Our luck was just that good. The rain helped us and such, and that made the difference in our profits. Because as long as it rains you don't have to irrigate the stuff you've contracted for 14 months and you can go out on the side and make money. You can do plantation work. For that you had your number, and as long as you had it--"Number such-and-such, Tanim Kazo," the luna would write it down. So then when they settled up [payday], they would give it to you at the sugar [company] office.

MK: What did you think while the luna was with you--having a luna with you while you worked?

KT: As long as you weren't lazy, they wouldn't say anything. But if you were lazy, then they would get mad and say, "Go ahead! Go ahead!"

It's funny, but I guess I was just very good at working. Even kachi kane. There would be 80--from 70 to 80 in a full crew. There were work crews--like the Tanim crew, or the Nagata crew, or the Mizuta crew. And anywhere you went in Lahaina--there was only one guy from Niigata named Omori and--how should I say it. We would both pick a line [row] and both start out at the same time, but his cane was long and he threw it every which way. Even so, I went along and cut and stacked mine perfectly, so they called me the best in Lahaina for kachi kane. I was that fast.

And it was because other people would bend way over to do it, but I would never stoop. I would squat down a little like this, and to kachi kane--because the cane is [big] like this. (Gestures) I would take two or three stalks like this and cut them away clean. If you squat down too far, you can't get your strength into it. So, just about like this--cut, and then lay them down. Your work looks clean afterwards, and it opens up fast in front as you go. Out of 80 people, I would blast right through the middle. So they said I was number one in Lahaina.

MK: Because you had a good method . . .

KT: Yes. I think that was it. So then the luna came over, because I was zipping along so much faster than the other people. He came over and kicked at quite a bit of cane that I had stacked up and checked whether the stumps were long or not. But even the stumps were done properly. Medama--he was called Medama. (Chuckles) [Medama also meaning "The Eyeball"--a nickname/pun] A Portagee named Joe Medama, he was the luna, but he didn't say a good word.

Then there was what was called hāpai kō which was loading [cane]. And even though I've always been skinny, here again there weren't many who could beat me. I seem little, but I think that because my mother's health was poor from the time I was little, my body has

been toughened. It's strong! So with cane or anything--I'd haul these huge bundles and carry them up the plank and stack them.

Then there was what was called "striking the pins" so that the cane wouldn't fall off. The other guys would whittle one with a knife or something and strike it, but not me. I would just take a kachi kane stub--whether the end was rounded or not--and--"tchunk, tchunk," stand it up. If the cane had been properly piled in small armloads it was all right.

So you'd just go in between and--"tchunk, tchunk"--drive them through. I would do it like that, and do it so that I wouldn't take as much time as other people. (Chuckles) So here again, I was number one.

MK: Why did you quit this type of work in 1916 and come to Kona if you were so good and had even made a \$3,000 profit?

KT: No, you see I was supposed to go to Honolulu--to Waiau, up above Wahiawa--to grow pineapples. We had made an agreement on one hundred acres. Then a man from Kona named Kikujiro Nakano who was also at Pump Camp in Lahaina came--but then the talks fell through. He came back from Kona and I went back from Honolulu to Pump Camp.

And he said, "You can grow anything in Kona."

"I'm thinking of going."

"Oh, well I'll go, too," I said. So I came with Nakano-san.

MK: But can you explain a little about Honolulu, please?

KT: Well, in Honolulu I was thinking of doing a kompang with Toyama, Kamata, and Yoneshiro on 100 acres. The landowner said, "We made an agreement, but wait one week and I'll look at the property, and then we'll make an agreement." So we waited and while we waited we negotiated to buy some mules because we would have to plow. But then the boss went up there and looked at it and decided to turn it into pasture. There was stream running through the hundred acres, and I guess the haole decided he would keep some cows.

So our agreement was called off and I came to Kona. But when I got here, it was a time when the coffee fields still had to be opened up and planted.

MK: Before we get into Kona--why did it come about that you went from Lahaina to Honolulu?

KT: No--that was because while I was doing ukekibi--the number two or ratoon crop, it was decided that I would do it. But then a person from Okinawa bribed the luna and he got it, and that ticked me off. I figured I didn't have to stay in a place like that. I could go anywhere and find work. That's the way I felt, so I left there and said the heck with 'em.

MK: So you thought you would go to Wahiawa and grow pineapples, but . . .

KT: We couldn't make an agreement, so I came to Kona. I couldn't grow pineapples, but I came here (chuckles) and got in the coffee business. After that I decided to try roasting the coffee like we do now, and we branched out in all directions.

MK: How did you get the money to come to Kona?

KT: Oh, well, we had money from the ukekibi, and we--my father and I--would both work 30 out of 30 days and put it all in the bank. So at that time, Nakano-san came to me, he had about six kids, but no money. And I found out later--when the owner of Ishii's store in Lahaina wrote me a letter asking if Nakano-san was doing well in Kona, and would I please write if he was--because the owner [Ishii] said that he was owed \$60 and would come to get it. So I wrote back that Nakano-san was having as hard a time as ever.

The problem was that this Pākē said he wanted to sell the lease that he had. We asked him how much he wanted to sell it for and he said that it was a lease on seven acres, but that it wasn't all cleared--only about three acres were cleared, so he said he would sell for \$500.

Nakano-san's aikāne, a man named Kojiro Sasaki, who was also from Miyagi Prefecture, had also come thinking to stay with him. So those people were in Kona, too. It had been about five or six years since they came over from Kaanapali [Maui], but they really didn't have any money and so they couldn't buy it [the lease] for their aikāne.

So I went to Maui then and got the money out of the bank and came back. But we had promised to pay the Pākē on such and such a date, and it was right down to the deadline. And then I missed the last boat that would get me back in time. "Oh, no," I thought. Since I had missed the boat to Kona, I got on a boat for Hilo. There was one called the Kilauea that went back and forth. So I got on it and went as far as Mahukona. Then from there I went up to Waimea and rode the mail car and got to Kona the next morning. So I was able to make the deadline and buy [the lease] for Nakano-san.

MK: That wasn't the time when you first came to Kona was it?

KT: No. It was in between (phrase unclear). So even if Nakano-san had decided to buy it, he didn't have any money, eh? And Sasaki-san, who had come over counting on his friend, didn't have any money either. It gave me a chance to get established. Later, Nakano-san wanted out, but didn't have the money. So I went to get it and went and talked to my father--because he had the papers from the bank--talked to him and got the money from the bank and brought it over and bought [the lease].

MK: I'd like to back up just a little bit--about when did you come from Lahaina to Kona for the first time?

KT: Oh, well--like I said yesterday, 1916. No, I came ashore in Kailua on December 22, 1915. And then on the April 16, 1916 I bought the kopi mountain for myself.

MK: That was the five-and-a-half acres in Keauhou on a Bishop [Estate] lease that you bought for eight hundred dollars?

KT: Yes. A Japanese had it before, and I bought the lease from him.

MK: When you first got to Kona and saw this kopi mountain, what did you think?

KT: Well, for me there really wasn't--back then kopi was cheap. It was a time when it was only nine cents a pound. So I thought if you bought something when it was cheap, then you could make money later on. Well, I say make money, but I really had no experience. Still, I figured you never know if you don't try but even now I still don't know if getting involved [in the coffee business] was the right thing or not--and it's been 64 years now that I've been here.

Kona is a place sort of like hell, in that once you get there you can never get out. (Chuckles) The weather's too nice and it's so relaxed. But it certainly wasn't bad for me. I was able to make quite a bit of money, buy some property, build a house, and I still have some savings. We're not uncomfortable by any means.

MK: Right now, you mean?

KT: Yes.

MK: But in the beginning, how did you start [growing] coffee without any experience?

KT: One motive was that if other people could do it, then I figured I would give it a try. (Chuckles) Because I'm not afraid of hard work--I thought I'd see if I could make a profit at it. To try and make a profit--was one of my convictions. Because you can't succeed if you plan to lose money. (Chuckles)

MK: So around June of 1916 your father came over, too, and you worked together--what did you do in the beginning to get this coffee mountain started?

KT: Oh, well, in the beginning Sasaki got a job called holehole trimming the leaves off the cane, and he would do that. Also, the [Kona Development] sugar company's--there were railroad tracks down below here--because there was a mill down below Holualoa and the rails ran for quite a ways. But because it was a one-way road, there was work constructing small side roads and turnoffs.

We would contract for things like that as a group and do it with four or five people. We would do things like that to make some side money.

MK: You say you would make some side money, but about how many dollars?

KT: Oh, back then it was--it wasn't too bad. It had gone up to about two dollars by then.

But the work--if they want to make a cut in the mountain nowadays, they just blast away with machines and haul it away in trucks. But we would break the rocks, load them, drag them up a place at least 15 or 16 feet high, and haul them out the side road. And then up above, we would take the dirt and rocks from the cliff and break them up and load them in a wheelbarrow and push it to level the ground.

Everything wasn't machines the way it is now. You used your arms and legs for whatever you did. Back then though, we felt like two dollars was a pretty good deal.

MK: So when you bought the coffee [field] in 1916 it didn't have any coffee yet?

KT: No, there was coffee, but my father would take care of it. I would work with my father after I had come back from the mountain. Oh, yes. We would work even after getting home from work--until it got dark. Nowadays there's no comparison, because mostly people just don't work.

MK: So what kind of work did you do on the coffee mountain in 1916?

KT: Mostly it was the coffee mountain. We had to harvest the coffee. Harvest and then next you have to prune the branches and spray to kill the weeds. But in the old days we would do hō hana for that. And then if there was time in between working on the kopi mountain, you could go outside [and work]. The plantations had work, so we would go there. And in time we bought a truck and would hāpai.

MK: That was around 1920. . . .1923?

KT: Nineteen twenty-three. Yes.

MK: But in the beginning, when you opened up the coffee fields and did road work and plantation work--comparing all of those, which do you think was the best?

KT: No. Back then I didn't think about which was best, but I intended to succeed at coffee growing, so during the year the thing I thought about in my heart the most was coffee. I didn't have any real interest in other work.

MK: How much coffee did you harvest in 1916?

KT: Uh--well, there are the seasons to keep in mind. First of all, depending on the weather. . . .in the old days the harvesting was done early, usually by November 29th the picking of the beans was over with. Then we would prune and such so that by New Year's it

was done. It was strange, but back then in Kona a light rain would come in the evenings so that the coffee would ripen just right. Nowadays, when it's sunny, it's sunny for six months straight. And if it's going to rain--you'll have two days of good weather and then it'll rain. In the old days, even if you didn't have a [water] tank you could get by with just a 55-gallon barrel or so.

But then after that, the weather gradually got so, there would sometimes be sunshine for four months straight and because there was less rain, everybody started needing [water] tanks. And at first people just made five-by-eight foot tanks--eight feet in diameter and five feet high. But later eight feet became ten feet, ten feet became twelve. . . . gradually rain became less and less.

Before that, it was almost strange the way it would rain every night. So things grew very well. If the kanakas planted taro or whatever, it would grow very well. It was a time like that.

Look at it now! If the weather's good--it's good. If it isn't going to rain--it isn't going to rain. When it's going to rain--it pours. There's none of the climate that they had in Kona around the time I came. There used to be heavy, sudden evening rains and they would clear up just as suddenly as they came.

MK: In the beginning, back in 1916, did you have a drying platform?

KT: Yes, at that time, there was one. At that time I bought the lease from a Kineimon Harada. Well, there was a small 18-by-30 foot drying platform. And for the coffee pulper, there was a large engine, five-horsepower engine, and a simple drying platform. Later, I made a 18-by-23 foot drying platform and added a second story.

END OF SIDE TWO

SIDE ONE; TAPE NO. 9-11-1-80 TR

MK: You were telling me about the drying platform . . .

KT: The one I bought from Kineimon Harada was 18 feet wide, with 30 foot shelves. It was a very simple affair. The frame was made from guava wood and was very simply made. And the pulping area --well, the shelves were made so that they were about 8 feet wide, and at a height of 5 feet there was a jōgo set up to mix the red kopi.

The engine was a gasoline engine that was--well, a pretty old engine. It was a 5-horse power one that was sitting there. Cranking it would really leave you out of breath. (Laughs) And then, ". . . pa-ching . . . pa-ching . . . pa-ching . . ."--and it would pulp the coffee. It was like that. The engine wasn't even mounted on a

cement foundation, but was just mounted on four big round redwood logs put together with rocks in between so that they wouldn't move--and then the engine was set up on that. It was so simple--we can't pulp with it like that, I thought. So I made a foundation from cement.

Then we made an 18 by 24 foot two story house for the pulping. We had the machines and stuff for pulping set up downstairs. Upstairs we had the red kopi spread out, and it was set up so that you could pour the araiboko [semi-processed coffee]--the coffee--right downstairs. Then after it was pulped we would put it in boxes. We made quite a few improvements over the way it was in Harada-san's time.

MK: Did improving the machines like that cost money?

KT: Sure it cost money.

MK: About how many dollars?

KT: Well, at the time, it was pretty cheap. Unfinished boards--one-by-twelves--were, uh, about seven cents a foot. And back then [American] Factors would lend us the money. That was because if you had a store, you could make a deal with Factors where they would supply you the merchandise. The store would then sell to the small [tenant] farmers. And then when kopi harvesting season came, the small farmers would take their kopi to the store. It was a time like that.

So we could buy things and eat all year 'round--because Factors would lend to the stores, and the stores would lend to the farms. In the old days it was like that. It got to be like that.

MK: So at that time you always went to one store?

KT: Yes. At first I was at one store--it was run by a friend--called Sasaki Store. But then we had sort of a falling-out. The falling-out was--my aikāne---Sasaki Keauhou Store had first opened when I was still new to Maui, and since it was convenient for both of us, I decided to deal with him when I came to Kona.

But then a fellow named Eitaro Yoshioka had a car called an Overland [jeep] that he was having trouble with and he couldn't get around. So he said to me, "I'm going to go to Hilo and get a different [car], Tanima. As an aikāne, can you help me a little?"

I told him that I would do what I could, but said, "Look carefully before you buy any car. Otherwise, you'll make a mistake jumping at something that looks good just because you're fed up with the car you have now. So check it out carefully and then buy."

He thought he would buy a good Ford he had found for \$275. So I came to a fellow named Matsumoto here in Kahaluu who was running a \$10 tanomoshi that had 20 members. We would pay in \$10 each month, and since I was already a member, I got a tanomoshi loan and went and asked Sasaki to send the \$275 to Yoshioka for me.

Well then, later on I told Yoshioka that I had asked Sasaki to send him the money for me and found that he [Sasaki] had acted like it was his own pocket money. Sasaki had taken the money I gave him and acted like he himself was loaning it out. That started it, and we got into a big fight. So then I quit going there. There was a small store in Honolulu run by a man named Tadao Fukuda, and so I went there and dealt with him.

MK: In the beginning, in 1916, when you took your coffee to the store, and the store took it to AmFac--was there any profit for you in the beginning?

KT: Well, in the beginning, there wasn't really much profit. When we bought the lease we expected a crop of 180 bags but we only got about 80 bags, so there was about 28 bags difference. And out of that we had to pay the coffee pickers, and buy fertilizer--and we had to pay taxes to the authorities. So there wasn't much profit--just a little something for our time.

MK: Were you hiring people to do the picking even back then?

KT: Yes. We could still manage, though. Back then rice was \$3.50 a bag, and liliko'i and such were 25 cents a pound or so. Bakalaw was--well, for about \$3.00 you could buy an armload. (Chuckles)

MK: How about a bag of coffee at that time?

KT: At that time--well, at that time, it was running about 9 cents a pound, with about 75 pounds to a bag. One bag of red kopi making 25 pounds of parchment. So if it was 75 pounds at 9 cents (calculates aloud). So it was about \$6.75 a bag.

The wage for picking back then was about 75 cents a bag. And we would pick, too. Drying, picking--but you couldn't do it all. Then in the evening--at about 4:30--we would go home and write down who picked how many bags and all like that.

Then I would go get the donkeys--there would be about three bags on each donkey--and take the bags into the pulping house. That evening we would also have to get the coffee out of the bags, or the juice inside the berries would come out--because the freshly picked coffee would spoil fast. So we would do that, and lots of things.

It was a long time ago, but once we really got working--if you think of it in terms of time like they do nowadays, it [the profit] really wasn't much. There was even a time where because of the market you could take a bag of parchment in and still not be able to buy rice and shōyu. There was even a time when it was only four and one half cents a pound.

MK: About when was that?

KT: That must have been about, uh--uh--about 1924 or 1925, I guess. At a time like that--well, as far as eating went, you could always get something at the store.

But then in 1935 they declared an imbalance of payments. Because the store was borrowing heavily from Factors and lending a lot to the farmers--and the debt problem came up. So they decided to review the debts--anyone with between \$5,000 and \$100,000 debts.

At that time, when I went to the meeting, some people were proposing that the debts be reduced by five percent, but I said that it wouldn't amount to a solution unless they reduced debts over \$5,000 by 15 percent. That was in central Kona--there used to be a seinen-kai hall there, but now it's all tract homes. It's on the right hand side as you go up to where the hospital is now. That's where we had the meeting.

At the time, I attended as the president of the Keauhou jigyōdan and presented my reform proposals for 15 percent reduction. So then Morihara-san, the storekeeper, said that it was a problem that should be left up to the store and the businessmen--that they couldn't make a blanket settlement because some people had small debts, and the store should consider the amount of the debt and talk with each person separately. So that was finally the general conclusion, and they were able to settle the matter.

MK: That's a very good story. I wonder if we could hear some more about that next time? We've gone over an hour and a half today, you must be tired.

KT: No, no. Nothing to tire me out.

MK: It was very good. Thanks a lot.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 9-27-2-80 TR

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Kazo Tanimi (KT)

December 16, 1980

Kahaluu Mauka, Kona, Hawaii

BY: Michiko Kodama (MK)

[NOTE: Interview conducted in Japanese. Translation done by Paul Scott Lehman.]

MK: Tanimi-san, when I came the last time you told me about how you had first gotten into the coffee business with your father on 5-½ acres of land in Keauhou. Who picked all the coffee that first year--on the land in Keauhou?

KT: Well, back then mostly it was kanakas because they were the ones who mostly picked the kopi before that. So it was kanakas and, uh, in the very beginning a man named Oriichi Hashimoto, a Japanese, would come and pick. Then there were the Umi--uh--Umikahales. They would come as a family and pick.

MK: How did you find and hire these people back then?

KT: Well, you say how, but they would come to me and ask if they could pick kopi. Because there wasn't much work in Kona back then, people would mostly count on the kopi season and pick then. Nobody made a lot of money, just a little spending money.

MK: How many cents did you pay back then?

KT: Well, in the very beginning we paid seventy-five cents.

MK: Did Hashimoto-san or the kanaka family, the Umikahales, do any other work on your land other than picking?

KT: No, no. Just picking kopi. And when Hashimoto and the others were through at my place they would go to some other house and pick. Picking was one way those people had of earning money. When they were through at my place, they might go on to Kainaliu. And then when they were through in Kainaliu they would go to Kealakekua or someplace, and they would travel all around Kona picking.

MK: So Hashimoto-san and the kanakas--the Umikahales--didn't live at your place?

KT: The man called Umikahale had a house near ours. One, two--three houses down from us, I think. He was nearby, so naturally he asked if he could pick. Back then there weren't any cars, so if you had to go off anywhere it was by horse or by donkey. (Laughs)

MK: What kinds of things did you need back then to farm coffee? Donkeys and . . .

KT: Well, the donkeys were there because you had to haul the coffee. The people would pick it, you see, and the ones who had big families would pick eight, nine, or even ten bags. In the evening we'd check it all and see how many [bags were picked] by Umikahale and how many by Hashimoto-san. We'd check it and load it on the donkeys and go back and put the kopi in the pulping area. Because in two or three days it would start to get hard and we would have to pulp it. So if you had a lot of people [working] you had to pulp it every day, and we would bring it in by donkey.

MK: Did you have your own drying platform at that time?

KT: Yes, we did. The person who had been doing it before--the fellow named Kineimon Harada that I had bought the lease from had a small drying platform that was about 18-by-30 feet.

MK: So you had the drying platform, and the donkeys--what other tools did you need to make coffee?

KT: Oh, back then it was mostly picks, hoes, cane knives, saws; it was mostly things like that, that were needed.

MK: Where would you buy tools like that?

KT: Oh, the store would order them from American Factors and buy them. Then when we stopped by the store we would say that today we needed a kachi kane knife, or a saw to cut the kopi branches, or a sickle. So they would give us one and write it in the account book. Then when we got our kopi we would turn it over to the store, and the store would give that kopi to [American] Factors. That's the way it was done.

MK: Which person's store were you going to at that time?

KT: At that time I was going to Sasaki Keauhou Store. Before that I guess it was [Sasaki] Keauhou Store, too--Yoshisuke Sasaki's store.

MK: Would you always go to Sasaki Store when you needed something? Was it a set thing?

KT: Yes, well first of all, back then there wasn't much cash in circulation, so you would go to the store that you dealt with and buy things, and they would write it in the account book. That's the way it worked.

MK: Was it done in such a way back then that Sasaki-san would say to you or the others that you could go into debt up to such-and-such an amount--that you could go into debt just up to \$200 or \$300? Was there anything like that?

KT: No. There really wasn't anything like that. We would just estimate how much kopi we would get that year and estimate beforehand about how much we could buy.

So then they made the debt adjustment in 1937 or so, when everything [debts] started to pile up. There had been talk of it from about 1934 on, and then in 1937 all the stores got to work on it.

MK: So were you regularly taking your coffee to Sasaki Store until about 1916 or 1918?

KT: Yes. And of course Sasaki had his own [coffee] farm in addition to the store.

MK: When would you take your coffee to Sasaki-san's store?

KT: In the old days we were usually through with the kopi [picking season] by about December. By Tenchō-setsu, which was the birthday of the emperor, I think it was about November 29th for the Emperor Meiji, most of the kopi was finished already.

Some people would get theirs in by January, or the end of December. But in some areas where the elevation was high, harvesting would be delayed and they might not get it in till January, back then. Anyway now the timing is entirely different from the old days--probably because the climate has changed, I guess.

MK: Back then would you ever keep your coffee because you thought if you kept it a little longer, the price would go up?

KT: No, we couldn't do that--because we had been buying [items from the store], and the store had to pay [American] Factors, too. So they would urge us to get our coffee out as soon as it was picked. [American] Factors had to process it and get back the money that it had loaned out, too, and they would be in a hurry to fill orders that the main office had told them to send.

MK: Back in those days did you take your own coffee down to the store?

KT: Well, no--back then we would tell the store that we had 70, or 80, or 100 bags to be picked up. Then the store would send a truck, telling him to pick up so many bags from Tanimura's place and to take them from there over to [American] Factors--they did it like that.

MK: So you didn't use money at all back then?

KT: Well, we would sell the kopi, and if there was some left over we would have money. But otherwise most people hardly had any money back in the old days. Kopi was cheap, too. When we came--it was

about 1916 when we started growing kopi, but in 1916 it was about seven cents a pound. Then having started in 1916, in 1917 it went to 9-3/4 cents. It got a little better.

MK: How was the coffee business for you around 1916 and 1917?

KT: Well, back around then I thought that kopi didn't make very much money, and I wondered whether I should move back to Honolulu or something like that. But then before long--I forget what year it was, but the Germans made a treaty for some Pākē land [land in China] in a place called Tai-Ren and built a base there. But then a war started because the Germans were so powerful, and after the war--when it was over--the price of kopi went up a little bit again. I was blessed by a few things like that and thought then that it might be good. Those were my motives, and I was finally never able to leave Kona. (Laughs)

MK: Because the price got a little better you stayed in Kona . . .

KT: That's right. Yes. After that, what had been nine and ten cents before, it shot up to twelve cents and even fifteen cents. It was like that, so it was a little like gambling--at times like that we made money.

MK: When the price got a little better after the war, did you think about buying new tools or getting more land?

KT: Yes, I did. After that I opened up the land up above and planted it, and eventually I was working 11-½ or 12 acres.

MK: Were you still going to Sasaki Store then?

KT: Yes--at that time I was at Sasaki Store. Then in 1927, I think, a friend of mine named Yoshioka had a business carrying passengers in his car. He had bought a car called a Ford Overland, but it wasn't running right. So he said that he was going to go to Hilo--and he stopped by on the way there and told me that he was thinking of buying another car and bringing it back, but could I please help him out if he needed some money when he bought it. So I told him I could do something for him, but warned him not to fall for some other car and buy it just because the car he had then wasn't a very good one. I told him to check it out carefully and then buy.

"Okay, okay," he said.

Well, back then we didn't have that word, but he said, "All right."

So he went and then called me, and I went to a person named Kinya Matsumoto here in Kahaluu who ran a ten-dollar tanomoshi where you would put ten dollars in each month. There were about twenty members or so at that time, and I was in that. I put a bid in and got it [a loan], and Yoshioka had asked me to loan him \$200, so I took it to Sasaki Store and told them what Yoshioka had said--that he was able to buy a car and that he needed the money. And I asked

them to send it. I thought they were both my friends, so I went back without getting a receipt or anything.

But then it turned out that maybe Sasaki had sent the money to Hilo in his own name! So after that we got in a fight. I was so mad I wanted to whack him one on the head, and I went there full of energy. But he went in the store--crossed the veranda while I was outside arguing.

"I gave you that money and asked you to send it for me. You didn't pay for it, I did!" I told him.

So both of them, husband and wife, came out and said, "No. It was ours."

"What?" I said, and got so mad I ran up there thinking I wanted to hit the both of them. But when I got up there they ran inside, so I left them alone.

I was mad, though, and quit that store after that and changed over to Fukuda Store in Honalo. . . .A person called Fukuda Tadao. For a long time afterwards--around that time I had owed Sasaki \$400 but I had paid off the \$400 two years before! So I had a little to spare then, what with the tanomoshi coming in and all. And I guess I must have had some savings, too, since people actually came to me to ask for help. (Laughs) So being that Yoshioka was from Yamaguchi Prefecture, too, I helped him out.

But because of that trouble with the loan money I quit Sasaki Store and went to Fukuda-san's place. It was while I was there that the talk about debt adjustments started to mount around 1935. And then around 1937 the stores and the farmers finally talked it over, and they said that if your debt was small you would have to pay this much--and if your debt was big then you had to pay this much. It was like that.

MK: That was around 1937? But before that, up until about 1928, the price of coffee was good, wasn't it? At that time, when you were busy, you also got into coffee roasting and coffee buy-buy [buying and selling of coffee] didn't you? Could you tell us a little bit about the coffee roasting you did from 1920 to around 1925?

KT: Well, at that time I was farming, and a man named Manjuro Koike from Keopu brought a person I had never seen before and said, "Tanima-san, I'm Koike and this man is Hiroshi Hashimoto. He has been going to the boarding school in Hilo and has just graduated."

So they came to me and told me that they wanted to try roasting Kona kopi. I had quite a lot of coffee land, so I said, "Fine," and told them that I would provide the kopi. And I told them to find some konpa people [partners] and to try roasting it in Honolulu. That seemed to be the gist of the talk.

So the two of them came to my place with this talk and asked me to go in with them. Hiroshi Hashimoto was just out of boarding school and didn't have money, so he wanted me to go in as a konpa. Well, I had been young myself, and it was an era when we were all trying to find out what would make money (laughs), so we decided to try it. Hashimoto-san was the manager in Honolulu, and I would buy kopi in Kona, process it, and send it off.

MK: Did you invest money in this company--this konpa--from the beginning?

KT: Yes, well even if you say invest, it was only small money at the time--about a \$1,000. (Laughs) But Koike-san would send the kopi for us. There would be an order from Hashimoto-san to please send so many bags of kopi by boat and he would go to the Japanese Coffee Mill, which was in Kailua, and have it processed there and sent. Then once, or sometimes twice, a month I would go to Honolulu because I had business.

But then while we were doing that, Koike-san went to the pier in Kailua one day to pick up a letter from Hashimoto-san in Honolulu. And while he was reading it there on the pier he didn't notice that they were crank-starting a truck from the soda water company. They had left the truck in gear and the crank kicked back and hit Koike-san and he was killed instantly.

I saw it in the newspaper, and immediately went back [from Honolulu to Kona] because money was still owed to Koike-san for the kopi he had sent every month, and it seemed likely that the relatives would all get together for a meeting.

So I went back and hired a car in Kailua and went straight up to Koike-san's place in Keopu. It was just three or four days after the funeral and there were a lot of relatives there. I went to them and extended my condolences and said what an awful thing it was, and told them that I still had a debt of about \$500. Because I had been sending [kopi] to Maui and like that, there was some that I couldn't pay back because I had to get my money, too. So I told them that I would take responsibility and pay it. That even though Koike-san had died, to please trust me and not worry about it.

At that time, it seemed that one of Koike-san's relatives--I think he was a cousin--was the cook for the immigration office in Honolulu. He had come over from Honolulu because he was Koike-san's cousin, and he seemed to have been the person who was closest to him. So he said, "We'll wait, we trust you. I will carry on and continue the business from now on, so please just go ahead, and don't worry about it."

I was very grateful for that, and told him that I would take him up on his offer and that I wanted to continue in the future, so to please do it like that. I told them that I would be happy to pledge the lease on my land as collateral so that they wouldn't have any doubts.

"No, no," he said. "We don't need anything like that with your spirit." And so they were kind enough to trust me.

MK: So did Koike-san [the cousin] join the konpa and continue it that way?

KT: No, Koike-san [KT talks about Manjuro Koike] wasn't in the konpa. He had asked us to do it so he could send us his kopi, because he had lots of kopi fields, too. It seemed that Manjuro Koike had been a well-known figure in Keopu and so if he said to, everybody there would send us their kopi.

MK: But since everybody went to different stores back then--if they had debts at the store, how would they be able to take their coffee to the store and still be able to bring some coffee to you or Koike-san?

KT: At that time we were selling the roasted kopi in Honolulu, right? The money would come in from there and I would pay it to Koike-san. It was no problem, really. Occasionally the stores would all be stocked with roasted kopi if Koike-san sent some extra. It would pile up because we roasted every day, every day. If you didn't have some extra, you wouldn't always get it on time.

MK: So was it that the coffee you picked and took down to the Japanese [Coffee] Mill would then be sent to the roasting company in Honolulu that was run by Hashimoto-san, and then that roasted coffee came back to the stores to pay off debts?

KT: No. At that time we were sending a salesman to Maui, and that person would take it to the stores in Maui and sell it. And then here in Kona, for example, I took care of wholesaling.

And then in Honolulu there was a person who would go around town selling it. Hashimoto the manager would go around and get orders from kopi restaurants, and in the old days when the Pākēs who ran meat shops and such would sell kopi, and there were all kinds of general merchandise stores, so we would wholesale to places like that.

MK: What was the [brand] name of the roasted coffee?

KT: At that time the name was--there wasn't any name especially. We just sold it as "Kona Coffee--Roasted." (Chuckles)

MK: Did you make money during the five years you did that?

KT: No, we didn't make much money, and if you ask why, it was because the person who went to Maui, a man named Kojiro Sasaki embezzled money. And then one of my own company workers said his older brother was sick and had come over from Japan and it got so I was advising them on everything and even lending them money. When I checked the accounts after doing all that without complaint, I discovered that the money wasn't accounted for, so I raised a

racket. That was the start of it, and I told the other ones (konpa members) that it was getting dangerous, so we decided to sell [the business]. I had my own business and couldn't keep going to Honolulu to do that.

After that another person--I keep forgetting (phrase unclear). We sold the store [in Honolulu] to person from Kumamoto Prefecture who had a boat and went back and forth between the islands. He had a small office on Beretania next door to us and said he wanted to do it, so we sold it to him. At that time I stayed one month [in Honolulu] and taught him how to roast and then went back [to Kona].

Then I bought a truck and hauled kopi or goods that the stores had ordered that would arrive at the pier from Honolulu. I would go and ask if they wouldn't give me some work.

MK: How was the trucking business?

KT: Well, it didn't make very much money either, the reason mostly being that the roads were so bad. At that time--depending on the job it was possible even then that one load would be about \$100, but in the old days tires were so hard. One back tire would cost \$80 or more, and the ones in front, \$45. And ones like that would just tear right apart. So that's why I couldn't make any money, because of the expense for tires and such.

MK: From where to where did you haul things at that time?

KT: Well, uh--there was someone in Kona who did most of the hauling there--the father of a man named Marumoto did the hauling there. So I would just go from around Kainaliu to central Kona--that was about as far as I would haul. And there was a Portagee [Portuguese] up north, and in Kahaluu there was someone named DeGuair, and he hauled with an auto, too. Then there was a Japanese named Toyoki who hauled too. So I just did a little bit in the middle there [central Kona].

MK: Around that time, how much would you make in a day of hauling?

KT: No, well, around then there wouldn't be work in Kona every day. When there was work, there was work--of course around kopi season there was work hauling kopi, but after that I would hardly ever go over to Hilo.

At times when they were having a strike in Hilo and the strikers had been chased off the plantation, we would hire them as pickers if it was kopi season and I would go to bring them over. But back then the road to Hilo wasn't a good road like this. For the most part it was the kind of a road where you could hardly tell where to go. So the tires and such got so bad that it was ridiculous!

It was an era like that, so I quit before I made very much money. It was about [1926] three years after I got married, I guess, that I got things straightened out and just devoted myself to the kopi

business. My luck at that time--I don't know whether it was because I was young or didn't have experience, but I didn't make very much money.

MK: In the hauling business?

KT: Yes. I didn't make any money hauling, or roasting kopi.

MK: After that, from 1925, didn't you get into buying and selling coffee . . .

KT: That started mostly because the kopi mill would ask me to do it, because I had experience at looking at kopi and telling if it was good or bad, and whether it was well dried or not. Because I was familiar with things like that.

MK: What would you do as a coffee buyer?

KT: Well, they would ask me, and I would do it for a certain commission.

MK: How were the commissions back then?

KT: Well, I say commission, but it was really only--they used to just figure it as being about double a day's wages for picking kopi, and give me that. After all, it was a place where there really wasn't any way to make money, and I did it gladly. (Laughs)

MK: For that job would you go to the coffee farmers and get the coffee and take it to the [Japanese Coffee Mill] and do it like that?

KT: No. There was a manager at the kopi mill--the Japanese [Coffee] Mill, right? I would let him know each day that I had bought so many 1000s, or so many 100s bags. And I would ask him which we should bring down first, and he would say that today we should put out the stuff from such-and-such a place down south. So I would go and call them up and tell them that we would come to their place that day to pick up the kopi. I would let them know like that. So they [farmers] would put it out, and then it would be processed--because the kopi mill had to process and sell it before they would pay. After they [mill] sold the kopi they would pay. Then they would pay the growers, and because the growers had bought from [American] Factors they would pay the store. Then the store would take it and pay [American] Factors. (Chuckles) It was that kind of a troublesome era.

MK: You said that you bought and sold coffee for about seven or eight years, didn't you? But the price of coffee gradually got lower around 1929 or 1930, 1931, 1932, and 1933, didn't it? How was it, buying and selling coffee around that time?

KT: Oh, well, it was the same--because if you didn't get anything out you couldn't eat. (Laughs) They wouldn't lend to you anymore. So it was all the same no matter how cheap. . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: Go ahead, please.

KT: So even when the kopi was cheap they [farmers] would get theirs out, because if they didn't then the store wouldn't lend anymore groceries. So even when it was cheap, everyone would just complain to one another about how cheap it was, but they would send it out just the same. When the price was good, and when it was bad, it was a Kona where both the stores and the growers made their living from kopi. When you say Kona--that's coffee. When you say coffee--that's Kona.

MK: At that time, how would everyone live if the price of coffee was bad?

KT: Well, it was funny, but everyone managed to keep themselves fed with kopi somehow. Of course, we were farmers, and grew vegetables and other things, and somehow we were able to get by.

MK: But what would you do if you had lease rent, or some debts?

KT: Well, we would go to the store and talk to them about it, and they would lend to us. Otherwise, if we didn't pay our yearly rent and had our land taken away, the store wouldn't be able to get its money back at all. It was a situation like that. Kona in the old days was really kind of a funny place. (Laughs)

MK: You said before that you and the other kumi leaders had gotten together in 1934 or 1935 to talk about having the debts reduced, right? Could you explain a little about that? What actually happened?

KT: Well, as I told you already, back then it was done so that the stores and the growers would talk it over, and on the basis of each person's debt the store would say like you didn't have too much of a debt, so you pay such-and-such an amount--or that you had a lot of debts, so even though it's hard, please pay at least this amount. It was like that--there wasn't just one solution.

To use me as an example, I didn't have much of a debt to Fukuda-san at that time--just about \$400. So I asked Fukuda-san to give me 2 percent off from my debt, but he said, "Your debt is so small--what do you mean, 2 percent? Don't say that. Just pay me the money, I'm not saying that you have to pay it right now." So I just let the \$400 be, and paid it off completely in two years.

At the time, I especially thought that it was good that even though I had had a fight with Sasaki I had paid him off early on. If I hadn't paid him, there would have been things said until I was dead

about how he had loaned me money and we had gotten in a fight and I had left. I often thought then that it was fortunate that I had paid that all off.

MK: Did the government do anything when the price of coffee was low and there were debts? Lower the taxes or . . .

KT: But what I became aware of instead was that buying food to eat from the store was our biggest mistake. This was because they would add interest on. It was the silliest thing, finally the thought occurred to me that we had to pay off the debts and be free and clear on our own no matter what, even if it meant eating poor food. So we worked as hard as we could.

There were the plantations then, and some people went to the plantations, but I went to the plantation for just 12 days or so at that time. That was all--that was all, but then there was a kanaka contractor who asked me to come help repair a big church in Kailua. It was cement work. I did that for about one month. At that time I received \$1.75 a day and worked.

Other than that I didn't do anything on the side, I just stuck with kopi from then on. I opened land up and planted it--I would open it up one day, and then plant taro or something--Portuguese beans or kidney beans. I would do like that and plant things to eat--plant vegetables. I would work as hard as I could from before dawn until dark.

MK: Would you sell all the vegetables?

KT: No, we would just grow enough to eat. We would do like that, because beans are very good for you. And the taro--I liked poi, you see, and would make it myself and eat it. One time all these akule came in at Keauhou Bay and a Pākē and a kanaka got together and made a kompang. The Pākē worked as a meatman so he had some money--and they would catch the akule in nets.

Anyway, the taro I had planted had turned out so good, I made it into poi and thought I would sell it. So I went to Keauhou Bay and told them that I'd made some poi and would sell it and asked them if they wouldn't buy some--that I would sell cheap. I said that and went down and talked with them and they said, "All right." So we made a deal on it.

At that time I had about fifteen or sixteen bags of taro, I guess. That taro was such good taro. The land was good, I guess. Even when you pounded it [taro], it would absorb even more water and you would get more poi. I must have made about \$200 or \$300 on that. So I even did things like that--pound poi. It was because I would pound it in a mochi mortar like the Japanese use. I would pound--(chuckles) my wife would stir, and I would pound it with the mallet. I would pound it like that and then go sell it.

But then we got a reputation for having such good poi that we even had a haole named Mr. White, who had a ranch in Honoalo and had cowboys working for him, order and come to buy from us. (Laughs)

MK: Would you sell it by the pound?

KT: Yes, one pound. At that time I think one pound was twenty-five cents. It was cheap. Now a pound costs a dollar and something, but back then, uh, maybe fourteen or fifteen cents. Wait a minute, uh--anyway, (pause) I think it was ten pounds for about a dollar. So because it was cheap, and because it was pounded--the more you pound poi, the better it tastes, you see, so it was very popular, and I sold 15 or 16 bags full, I guess, and cleared \$200 or \$300.

MK: You did that just one time?

KT: Yes. Just the taro I had--at that time, most of the poi shops said they wouldn't buy taro for more than two dollars a bag, so that's why I decided to pound it.

MK: You said something during our earlier talk about growing taro and small potatoes over in Keauhou after the start of the second World War, didn't you?

KT: Yes. In those days everybody wanted to somehow make even just a little bit of money. So why we would grow vegetables was because then, someone would come once a week from north of Kohala, I think it was, to buy vegetables. So everybody around here would grow something in whatever little plot they had and send it out with that person. He would even buy one pound, two pounds, five pounds, ten pounds.

MK: So you grew taro and small potatoes over in Keauhou from the time of the war up until 1952?

KT: Yes. The war caused the price of taro to go up a bit at that time, and the poi shops would come to buy. So at times like that we would--well, you couldn't plant taro and such if you didn't clear the land, so we would clear it and plant. But back then the wild pigs would come and eat them and would get us pretty bad. So later I gave it up.

MK: Why did you keep growing coffee while you were growing taro and small potatoes?

KT: Well, coffee was the main--when we cleared the land, we would eventually plant kopi. Kopi was the main thing.

MK: So the taro and small potatoes were like a side business?

KT: That's right. (Laughs) It was the manuahi--just a way to make some spending money. Well, we would grow them to eat, and if they turned out especially well then we would sell them.

MK: How was the taro or small potatoes business compared to the coffee business?

KT: Oh well, I thought kopi was better for me.

MK: Which one took more of your time?

KT: Oh well, kopi takes two or three years no matter what you do, but taro takes eighteen months if it's up high. Dasheens and such only take five or six months to grow. We mainly grew those for Honolulu--to be used in the nishime at New Year's-- and would put them out with that in mind.

MK: Didn't it take a lot of work to do taro, koimo, and coffee? How did you do it?

KT: Oh well, in the old days--even if you were going to dig up a guava tree, you wouldn't use a machine. Back then you used a pick like that we have here, and dug up the guava. Then you chopped it up and burned it, and later went back and planted. So we would grow the by-products we were just talking about for some extra money. We did it like that.

Now people won't do anything as silly as that--even if you tell them to, they won't. Back then there wasn't any way to make money--you couldn't make any. So we just did it like that and went through hard times just eating and staying alive. It was mostly something that people now would laugh at.

MK: When you were doing the taro was during--during and after the war [World War II], right?

KT: Yeah, uh--No. During the war--Back then they put a really odd price like 11.11 cents and wouldn't let it go up. That was the OPA [Office of Price Administration] price. Then when the war was over it really went up.

MK: What happened to you when the price went way up?

KT: I made a lot of money then, yes.

MK: Did you expand your fields?

KT: Well, before the war I had cleared and planted. At the time, the Japanese who went fishing--because back then the money in fishing was good, too--used to laugh at me.

"Tanima, people say you're a fool to cut guava and plant kopi." I even had that said to me.

So I would reply by saying, "Whether you call me a fool or anything else, I don't have any other work. I may be a fool, but this is what I do." So I cleared and planted.

Then after the war [World War II] was over the price started to go way up and [everyone] started kopi. Around that time we whipped the old ones into shape, planted new ones. We had some that were five years old, some that were eight years old, some that were three years old, some that were four. I had been planting them consecutively, so when they started to bear we got lots of kopi every year, and made quite a bit.

MK: Your father passed away in 1942, didn't he? How did you run the business? Were you employing someone?

KT: No, we did it as a couple. We would hire people to pick, but drying and turning and all we did as a couple. Mornings, we would get up very early. Evenings, even after the kopi was finished--after everyone had gone home I would stop picking kopi and haul it by donkey.

MK: You were still using donkeys?

KT: Yes, donkeys. Later, after the war [World War II], I got a jeep. Civilians were only able to buy jeeps after the government, or the military decided to dispose of them. It was a while after the war ended. That was quite a bit later. Up until then it was donkeys. (Laughs)

MK: After the war did you still take your coffee to the store--or did you take it directly to the mill?

KT: The kopi, well, by then I didn't have any debts, so they would come from the kopi cooperative--from the mill--and tell me how much they were buying kopi for and ask if I would sell to them. So I'd tell him that I'd think about it, or say that so-and-so's mill said they would pay so much, like that. And he would agree to match it--so it was like that, because they were making money, too. So there was room for us to bargain, too. I would say, "No. . . ." and say that [American] Factors was buying for so much. Or that at the time Hawaii Coffee Mill was buying for so much, and Matsuoka was buying for so much. Or the Onaka Mill was buying for so much. It was like that because there were a lot of mills. So I would bargain with them using those names as a shield.

MK: What were the names of some of the mills around then? Other than Matsuoka, or Hawaii Coffee, or Amfac--what other mills were there?

KT: There was the Noguchi Mill, and a fellow named Tanaka ran one, uh, not Tanaka--Tanouye. And then there was Captain Cook [Mill]. Anyway, there were six of them, I think.

MK: In your opinion, which mill had the best reputation back then?

KT: At that time this fellow Matsuoka, who had formerly been a gambler, was giving a pretty good price. He was from Kumamoto, too, and there were a lot of people from Kumamoto Prefecture in business. He treated us the best, I think.

MK: When did the Matsuoka Mill go out of business?

KT: Well, let me see, uh--Ten years [later], maybe eleven. Because he got sick, and then after that kopi got cheap again, and lau hala weavings were supposed to sell well, so some people did lau hala. Then when the kopi got cheap the young people started to go to Honolulu right away--some went to America. So then it got so only women and old folks did the kopi. The young ones left as soon as kopi got cheap . . .

MK: About what year was this?

KT: That must have been--uh, it was after the war with Japan was over--that was in 1948, wasn't it? Oh, 1945. So that was, uh . . .

MK: You opened the land here in Kahaluu up in 1954, didn't you?

KT: Yes. I bought this in 1954. That's right--it was from about 1947 or 1948 that kopi gradually began to get cheaper and there weren't any young people around anymore.

Before long, the first hotel in Kailua--not Interisland--I'm so forgetful these days. So some people went to the hotel and gradually there were fewer people working kopi fields. And then after the war--the war between Japan and America--it got so bad that you couldn't find any takers if you wanted to give kopi land away.

When kopi was at its peak--the time when there was the most of it--there must have been 6000 or 7000 acres. Now look at it. There's just barely 3000 acres, I think. Nobody even looks at a kopi field, and the hotels just keep on going up. Finally now, the farming is just nothing.

MK: You've been working with coffee all along, haven't you . . . ?

KT: Yes. I plan to do it until I die. (Laughs)

MK: Why have you been in the coffee business for such a long time. . . . Knowing what you know, why only coffee?

KT: Well, when you get to be makule, nobody's going to hire you, right? And you can't go work for money--people won't hire you if you're makule. . . . So I have the kopi field. It's small--just 2-½ acres, and I do it for my retirement.

And I have some money saved up, as well, so I don't have any worries. Even if I don't go to work I have my security, right? I don't have to worry about eating. I have some money in the bank, so I really don't have any discomforts.

MK: But if you have money in the bank, and you get your social security, and you have no discomforts, why do you still work on the coffee?

KT: This is my own land that I have planted--I just can't throw it away. (Chuckles) And I'm healthy. If I weren't healthy--if my body was weak I couldn't do it.

MK: You have an only daughter, don't you? And a grandchild? Would you like your grandchildren to do a business like this in the future?

KT: Yes, I would, but I can't count on it. [Talks about grandson.]

MK: Now you and your wife do all the work, is that right? . . . In the old days did the other people in your kumi or the people who lived nearby ever help you out?

KT: No. Well, everyone around here was in the coffee business, that was one way they had to stay alive. Everyone had kopi fields, they wouldn't come. It was all from outside. People from outside didn't have work, so they would come wondering if there wasn't someplace they could pick kopi. so we would hire the outsiders.

"Let me pick," they would say."

"Okay, come pick."

It was like that. I never had trouble finding pickers. From a place called Keopuu that was seven, eight, maybe ten miles or more away would come these two kanakas with big families. If both came they would usually bring 17 or 18 children along, because they had about 20 between them. So I never had any trouble. Even doing the 11 or 12 acres over in Keauhou, I never had any trouble. This, that we have here, now is picked by some Filipinos from close by--the kopi ladies. They come and pick it.

MK: How many cents do you pay now for a bag?

KT: Oh, I pay ten dollars.

MK: That's quite a difference [from past coffee-picking wages], isn't it?

KT: Yes. Well, when the price of kopi was up, there were times when they paid \$3.00 or \$3.50.

MK: How is the price right now--the price of coffee?

KT: The price now isn't bad. I don't know how big a harvest we'll have this year, but the selling price last year for one pound of parchment--that's the kopi on the drying racks--was \$1.58. So just from this plot here we got, uh, I would know if I looked in the account book--but our gross income was \$11,400 and something. And then on the third of October I got the percentage payment on my kopi, which is where they figure it all out and divide by the number of pounds, I think. I received \$494.71.

MK: All we've talked about all along has been coffee, but when you weren't doing something in the coffee business, when you came home to rest, did you get together with people and do anything?

KT: No, nothing like that, really. Now the kopi fields are small, but when you're working 12 acres of land you don't have time to play. If you want to do something, there're an unlimited number of things to do.

MK: There was lots of work even when it wasn't the season?

KT: Sure there was. In the kopi business there's never a time when you can really say that you've finished. When you're through with the harvest, there's the pruning to do, and you have to spray the weeds. Then because the new shoots come out you have to create some shade, and then go around and take care of the branches.

But then if you thought you didn't want to do any of that, well, you could play all year and not work in the fields. But because you didn't take care of the fields, they would be wild. If you wanted to get a good crop of kopi out there was no end to the work. You had to do this, and you had to do that. There was lots of work. But if you didn't want to work the fields would revert to mountain. There was always something--some place with a withered tree that needed to be replanted--some work to be done.

MK: When you think about your life, how do you feel about coming to Kona and living here all these years?

KT: Well, now I feel that even though I've suffered, I've got my own place to live and some spending money. Kona has the best climate, it's not cold and not hot, and I really don't want for anything. I really think that Kona is paradise.

END OF INTERVIEW

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF KONA

Volume I

ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**Ethnic Studies Program
University of Hawaii, Manoa**

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